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STUDIES BY SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES.



AMONG all the works that an artist produces are none which have for students of art an interest to equal that possessed by the preliminary drawings and studies which he executes as preparatory expressions of the convictions which guide him in the production of his larger pictures. In these more or less tentative efforts he shows his very thoughts; he sets down the ideas and imagi-

nations which have influenced him to attempt the construction of a monumental composition; and he puts into visible form the experimental intentions which lead him by an elaborate process of selection to decide upon the ultimate form and character of his finished work. In his studies, in fact, he gathers the matter without which his picture could hardly exist, and he draws from the inexhaustible treasury of Nature the materials which he combines afterwards to give shape and consistency to his pictorial conception.

When he has his picture before him he is trammelled by many considerations: he has all kinds of externals to concern himself with and to subject himself to. Nature can no longer make to him her direct and frank appeal; he can only meet her in the manner that convention prescribes, and can only avail himself of her aid just so far as he is permitted by the code of artistic propriety which prevails in the world in which he happens to live.

For these reasons every opportunity for examining the sketches and studies of a true artist is in the highest degree valuable. We do not know under which restrictions of technicality, or destination, or under the difficulties of production, the great canvas which in our mind makes or mars his reputation has been produced; but we may hazard a guess shrewdly enough that the experiments through which the picture has been built up and completed have been made face to face with Nature and with her hand upon the artist's arm. However much he may have selected from them afterwards, and however much he may have departed from or varied the facts stated in them, it has been at her prompting that these records have been made.

It would have been impossible for him to idealize or alter the type of a face or figure, unless he had based his idealization upon a form which he had seen before him; his effects of color, of grouping, of light and shade, could not have been expressed with certainty or

adapted to the exigencies of his picture unless he had put them down in his studies as he met with them; the knowledge of great things and small things which makes the completed canvas sufficiently credible could never have been acquired save by laborious examination and noting of tangible and visible realities. In a word, if his after work is to be persuasive or convincing, it can only become so because it has been both persuaded and convinced by Nature herself, and because he has made in a succession of studies full profession of his own conviction.

In this, indeed, lies the peculiar instructiveness of a collection of preliminary drawings such as that which now so adequately represents Sir Edward Burne-Jones in the galleries of the Fine Art Society. They serve as a summary and signal of the endless labor which he expends upon the building up and perfecting of his pictures; but they have besides a particular significance as expressions of the view which he takes of Nature. His sense of reality, his acceptance of facts, and his individuality of selection, all of which contribute to make consistently personal the manner of his paintings, are seen in his sketches in their simplest and least conventionalized form.

The splendid assertion of his pictures is gained by the sacrifice of many of the qualities which make for realism; and, though we are quite willing to accept his pictorial convention for the sake of its admirable power and extraordinary individual beauty, we are none the less anxious to see in what sort of spirit he devotes himself to studying the finest idioms of the language from which he makes his translations. It is instructive to note with what turns of phrase and with what poetic perversions he clothes the ideas which he collects from the great original upon which he bases his own epochs; it is important to refer back his results to their first causes and to trace the growth of his performance from its starting-point in observation of fundamental details, which are no more exclusively at his disposal than they are at that of every sincere worker in art.



DECORATIVE PANEL.
BY
SIR E. BURNE-JONES.



PENCIL STUDY OF HEAD FOR "ARTHUR IN AVALON."
BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

And this reference back to first beginnings is the more essentially important in the case of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, because the history of his art life is, in a sense, a peculiar one, and unlike that with which it is possible to write of any other artist of the present day. From the first he has taken a place of which he has been the sole occupant. He has avoided much of the experiences which fall to the lot of the student of art. His growth has been fostered in ways that are unusual, and his career has been in many respects peculiar. He began to study art systematically at an age when most young painters are attempting to produce; and he began at a period when there was abroad in the art world a curious unrest that inclined those workers who troubled themselves with theories about what was right and wrong in artistic motives towards a certain romantic mediævalism.

He was not at any time a copyist of other men. Even at the outset of his career his individuality was a marked one, and his response to Rossetti's influence was, like his regard for Nature, evidenced more by the manner of his adaptation than by the amount of matter which he directly derived from either model. He studied them both closely and attentively, but always with the intention of using the knowledge which this study gave him to build up methods of his own, marked with characteristics which should be expressive of his most cherished feelings and beliefs.

How consistently he has followed out the purpose which he formed when he first decided to make the profession of painting the occupation of his life, can be easily seen by an examination of the achievements that have been the outcome of his extraordinarily assiduous devotion to the practice of art. He has not wavered in his aim to give the world only those pictures which would help that movement in the direction of romanticism in which he puts such sincere faith.

The simplicity of his earliest efforts have given way to more complex combinations, to vigorous color studies and great decorative arrangements; but these later works are only expansions of the ideas with which he was occupied while he was as yet feeling his way towards the place that he now holds by right of sole possession. There has been in his life none of the coquetting with the fancies of many schools which is peculiarly an attribute of the usual student, who only settles down into consistency after he has passed through every stage of contradiction.

There is one admirable accompaniment of the steady adherence which Sir Edward Burne-Jones has ever given to the principles which govern his art, and this is an equally steady progress in the command which he has obtained over executive difficulties. The solving of technical problems which at first caused him evident trouble, and at times came but incompletely off, has year by year become to him a matter of far less anxiety. Facility of expression and power to interpret have with him grown with excellent rapidity.

In the days when he was struggling against the imperfections of his experience, and was striving to compel his less practised hand to set down what his more highly-trained mind had conceived, he had to depend upon convention to help him over the many difficulties that beset him in his daily work; but now with the freeing of his hand has come fuller realizing of his intentions. He draws now as he thinks, with vigor and directness. He fills his pictures with detail all of which is studied, not invented, because invention is easier than exact record.

His art has gained in richness, in variety, and in subtlety, because it has gained in decisiveness and knowledge as well. The close application of hundreds of studies of figures, draperies, heads, hands, feet, and



PENCIL STUDY OF HEAD FOR "THE SIRENS."
BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

other numberless parts and details of his compositions, has given him a command over himself which enables him to use to fullest advantage all that is best in his capacity.

Picture-painting has with him long ceased to be a mere matter of conventionalizing certain delightful but unrealizable intentions; it has instead become the channel through which he can make plain to others the fancies which fill his mind.

The multiplicity of the processes which he employs to secure this perfecting of the details might well seem surprising to anyone who did not understand the spirit in which he works. The stages through which one of his canvases passes between the first setting out of the pictorial idea and the final completion of the entire work, are unusually numerous, and are as often as not spread over many years.



PENCIL STUDY OF HEAD FOR "THE BRIAR ROSE."
BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

At first the picture takes form merely as a slight suggestion, a note in black and white, which expresses only the motive and subject, and commits the artist to nothing only the general arrangement. From this, however, is constructed a full-sized cartoon in color, and with all the various essential parts of the picture set out in proper relation, so that the effect of the whole composition may be easily appreciated. Then follows the stage in which the projected picture is made or marred, the stage during which every figure and face, every foot and hand, all the draperies and costumes, and even the backgrounds and odd accessories, are studied from Nature and recorded over and over again, until any doubt which the artist may feel is set at rest. Not till then does he begin to deal with his design upon the canvas or to paint any part of it.

He keeps beside him while he is at work these studies upon which he has expended so much care; and it is

from them, with frequent references to life itself, that the picture is really completed. The method is sound because it provides for the proper acquiring of all the information needed during the process of painting, and it guards against danger that the artist may, by the way of experiment, be injudicious enough to try new effects and changes at the risk of destroying what he has already set down.

His studies of draperies, figures, heads and limbs are more often done in pencil than in anything else, but he works also with freedom in many kinds of water-color, pastel, crayon, and even gold paint. In his use of lead-pencil he stands, however, almost alone, for the number of artists who employ habitually this medium for the expression of their ideas is now curiously small. He deals with it in the silver-point manner, working with fine lines, and aiming at subtle effects rather than at violent contrasts of light and shade; his best use of it is perhaps seen in the Beggar Maid drapery or in the series of large heads for the Sirens picture; but there are many other drawings which bear evidence almost as strongly to his mastery over this material. It lends itself admirably to the peculiar delicacy of line drawing and to the gentleness of definition which are the particular attributes of the method in which he handles his preliminary studies; and it seems well adapted to give him just that statement of essential facts which is required to make plain to him in his later painting the points that have to be most closely observed.

Just as he has trained himself to study those details which are most valuable to him all through his after work, so he seems to have learned to know by instinct in what technical form to clothe most usefully his observations. The medium he employs is as much a part of his scheme of practice as his selections of the subject-matter of his picture; and indeed this may be said to be characteristic of his whole working life. To keep the right congruity between motive and interpretation has ever been his aim, and not the least important of these means to an end has been his devotion to preliminaries.

DECORATIVE NOTES.

IN THE early fall, golden rod with purple asters combined for table decorations are wonderfully effective. In selecting these flowers, let the blossoms be of medium size, perfect in form, graduating in different tints. If a centrepiece is desired, the plain white is the most desirable. On this place a round mirror, with a glass jug of no particular color. In this stand a bunch of these fall flowers. As a table border, combine yellow, white and a touch of purple, with rosettes at each corner.

Although the Delft-room has been overdone, yet new effects constantly arise in decoration. In an out-of-town house quite removed from a large city, a clever home-maker devised for this place a successful plan. The walls were covered with plain blue denim, fastened with small tacks on the selvedge. This simple wall furnishing made an excellent background for a few prints in white and black. On the floor was a good-sized rug in Delft tints, bordered by a neat cream matting. At the windows were simple cheesecloth curtains, with a wide ruffle fluted and trimmed with a narrow lace.

As for floral decorations, geranium leaves in all their varieties form a charming border when combined, or can be arranged as a mound for the centre. Rose petals, tiny buds or any small blossom looks well if grouped in bunches or placed separately at equal distances.